

REMARKS

I. Status of the Claims

At the time of the Action, Claims 1, 3-5 and 7-10 were pending. Claims 1, 3 and 8 stand rejected under Section 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,525,410 to Hansen (Hansen). Claims 1, 3, 5, 8 and 9 stand rejected under Section 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,508,094 to McCarthy et al. (McCarthy). Claims 1, 3 and 8 stand rejected under Section 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,618,612 to Gstrein (Gstrein). Claims 4, 7 and 10 were indicated to contain allowable subject matter. These rejections are addressed below.

II. Rejections Based on Hansen

In responding to Applicants' arguments in Applicants' response dated 25 March 2003, the Action cites two passages of Hansen, each of which Applicants address below.

The first passage of Hansen cited in the Action is a portion of Claim 1 of Hansen, which recites "said multistrand yarn comprising a plurality of filaments twisted together" (*see* Hansen at column 4, lines 17-18). Applicants note that this language is followed by the passage "said filaments having diameters in the range from 0.04 to 0.18 mm" (*see* Hansen at column 4, lines 18-20). Although the Action equates the filaments of Hansen with the monofilaments recited in the pending claims of the present application, Hansen clearly distinguishes its "filaments" from monofilaments. For example, Hansen states that "the filaments used to make the multi-strand yarns for the present invention **have diameters which fall between those used in the prior art as filaments for multifilament yarns and as monofilaments**" (*see* Hansen at column 2, lines 44-47). As another example, Hansen states that "[i]ndividual monofilaments typically have diameters over 0.18 mm" (*see* Hansen at column 1, lines 66-67) and that "[a] single multifilament yarn is composed of a great number of individual filaments of small diameter, typically less than 0.04 mm" (*see* Hansen at column 2, lines 2-5). Thus, it is apparent that Hansen plainly regarded the "filaments" cited in the Action as being something different than either the filaments of a multifilament yarn or monofilaments, such as the monofilaments recited in the present claims.

The second passage of Hansen cited in the Action, which describes yarns of a different prior fabric than that of Hansen discussed immediately above, states

"[m]onofilament yarns may be used singly or, as implied above, in a plied bundle comprising three or more monofilaments and having a minimal twist to hold the monofilaments together" (see Hansen at column 1, lines 63-66). Notably, Hansen describes the twisting of the monofilaments as "minimal" and states that the twisting is present "to hold the monofilaments together." In contrast, and as indicated in amended Claim 1, the monofilaments of the twisted structure of the present invention are "firmly" twisted together (see page 5, line 8 of the specification for support for this amendment), which enables them to permanently anchor batt fibers needled into the fabric as well as provide other performance advantages described in some detail in the specification. As such, this configuration is clearly different from the monofilaments described in Hansen.

In view of these differences between the claimed subject matter and Hansen, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection under Section 102(b) based on Hansen cannot stand, and respectfully requests that it be withdrawn.

III. Rejections Based on McCarthy

The Action addresses the arguments proffered by Applicants in Applicants' prior response by stating "[t]he Examiner recognizes that McCarthy shows a yarn structure comprising eight monofilaments twisted together, rather than eight strands of twisted monofilaments." This latter characterization is still not entirely accurate. Instead, McCarthy discloses a press felt with multifilament yarns and/or multistrand yarns much like the multifilament yarns described in Hansen, and distinguishes these multifilament yarns from monofilament yarns. For example, McCarthy states that "the multicomponent yarn may be a multifilament or multistrand yarn, whose individual components are fine filaments, or a polyurethane-coated monofilament yarn." See McCarthy at column 3, lines 64-67. Clearly, McCarthy considers its multifilament and multistrand yarns to be different than monofilaments, and so considers the filaments that comprise its multifilament and multistrand yarns to differ from twisted monofilaments. As such, Applicants submit that this element of Claim 1 is absent from McCarthy, and request that the rejection under Section 102(b) be withdrawn.

IV. Rejections Based on Gstrein

In rejecting Claims 1, 3 and 8 based on Gstrein, the Action concedes that Gstrein:

does not explicitly describe the felt as being seamed. However, since press felts are seamed together into an endless loop for use in the papermaking process, a use of a seam would be inherent in the felt construction, or, at the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to include a seam for joining the two ends of the felt together in an endless loop for use on a paper machine.

The Action at page 3. This statement is incorrect, inasmuch as some papermaker's fabrics, and in particular some papermaker's press felts, are woven as endless fabrics without seams. This process is described in the attached excerpt from S. Adanur, Paper Machine Clothing 38-39 (Technomic Publishing 1997). The skilled artisan would understand that the types of yarns that are appropriate for weaving an endless fabric rather than a seamed felt would be quite different, and would not look to Gstrein, which discloses endless woven fabrics, for guidance in choosing yarns for a seamed felt such as that recited in the present claims. As such, Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

V. New Claims

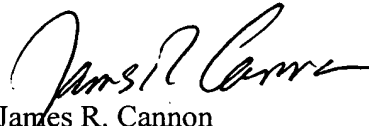
Applicants respectfully direct the Examiner's attention to new Claims 11-18, which are proffered for entry and examination above. Claim 11 recites that the monofilaments themselves have a helical construction. This subject matter was indicated in the Action to be allowable. Claims 12-18 depend from Claim 11 and should be similarly allowable.

Applicants also respectfully direct the Examiner's attention to new Claims 19-25, which recite that the monofilaments of the press felt have a diameter of between 0.2 and 0.3 mm. Although Applicants believe that the recitation of "monofilaments" should be sufficient to distinguish the yarns recited in the present invention from the multistrand and multifilament yarns disclosed in Hansen and McCarthy, nevertheless Applicants have proffered these claims to more sharply distinguish monofilament embodiments that may be particularly useful with the present invention from the art of record. Claims 20-25 depend from Claim 19 and should be similarly allowable.

VI. Conclusion

Inasmuch as all of the outstanding issues raised in the Action have been addressed, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance, and request that it be passed to allowance and issue.

Respectfully submitted,

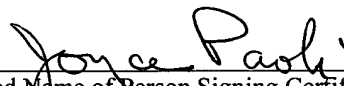


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